DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 701 PS 027 521

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TITLE Relations among Ethnic Identity, Parenting Style, and Adolescent Psychosocial Outcomes in European American and East Indian Immigrants.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Albuquerque, NM, April 15-18, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Acculturation; Adolescent Attitudes; *Adolescents; *Child Rearing; Cultural Differences; *Ethnicity; *Immigrants; Parent Attitudes; Parent Child Relationship; *Parents; Questionnaires; Secondary Education; Self Esteem; Social Adjustment
IDENTIFIERS *East Indians; Ethnic Differences; *European Americans; Identity (Psychological); Parenting Styles

ABSTRACT

The challenges of identity formation are particularly difficult for minority youth because of the clash of traditional culture and the host culture. This study examined the effects of parenting style, acculturation, and parent and adolescent ethnic identity on the self-esteem and school performance of East Indian and European American adolescents. Participating in the study were 70 East Indian and 70 European American adolescents, ages 13 to 19 years, and their parents. Adolescents and parents were interviewed separately in their homes. The instruments used were the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, Child Rearing Beliefs Measure, and Self-Description Questionnaire. Students' grades were used as a measure of academic performance. The findings indicated that adolescents who were themselves more ethnically identified and those whose parents had higher ethnic identity had higher self-esteem than students who were less ethnically identified themselves, and those who had parents with lower ethnic identity. East Indian parents rated the parenting philosophies of authoritativeness, training, and esteem significantly higher than their European American counterparts, with no difference in ratings of shaming. There were no ethnic group differences on self-esteem. East Indian American adolescents had an average grade point average of 3.37, significantly higher than the European American adolescent average of 3.14. East Indian American parents and adolescents had a significantly higher ethnic identification than European American parents and adolescents. (Contains 10 references.) (KB)

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Relations among Ethnic Identity, Parenting Style, and Adolescent Psychosocial Outcomes in European American and East Indian Immigrants

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of parenting style, acculturation, and parent and adolescent ethnic identity on the self-esteem and school performance of East-Indian and European American adolescents.

While forming a sense of identity is difficult for many adolescents, it is far more difficult for minority teenagers who live in the U.S. Phinney (1996) found that ethnic identity is an issue of great importance, particularly to minority youth. The challenges of identity formation are particularly difficult for minority youth because of the clash of traditional culture represented by their parents, and the host culture (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Though the literature is not conclusive, it reveals that ethnic minorities and immigrants' development of ethnic identity is related to other psychosocial variables.

Several studies have suggested that parenting style may also be related to self-esteem and school performance (Baumrind, 1971; Baumrind & Black, 1979). However the relations among parenting style, self esteem and school performance may be different for different cultural groups (Dornbusch et al., 1987; 1992). While authoritative parenting may lead to better adjustment, parents who might have been traditionally authoritarian, and who enforce cultural practices as part of their discipline do not have children with as much ethnic pride as the families that adopt authoritative practices. Chao (1994) proposed that Baumrind's theory is strongly rooted in the American cultural context and does not account the notion of 'training' which is an important element in the traditional Chinese childrearing paradigm.

Specific Hypotheses

1. Adolescents who have high ethnic identity will have higher self esteem and school performance than adolescents who have low ethnic identity.
2. Adolescents with parents who use more training and authoritativeness will have higher self esteem and school performance than those whose parents use less training and authoritativeness and more shame.
3. Adolescents with parents who are more ethnically identified will have higher grades and self esteem than adolescents with parents who are less ethnically identified.
4. There will be significant group differences in parenting styles: (A) Indian parents will report higher training and shame, (B) European American parents will report higher esteem and authoritativeness discipline.

Method

Seventy East-Indian and 70 European-American adolescents (aged 13-19 years) and their parents participated in the present research. Participants were recruited through word of mouth referral. They were first contacted by phone, and a meeting arranged in the participants' home. Adolescents and parents were interviewed separately. Participants were informed about the study and their rights. The interviews with adolescents took an average of 15 minutes, the parents about 30 minutes. The participants were not reimbursed for their time.

1. *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* (Phinney, 1992) was used to measure the ethnic identity levels of the parents and the adolescents. This scale consists of 20 statements where participants rate their agreement or disagreement on a scale from 1 to 5. The scale yields a total ethnic self identification score as well as subscale scores for belongingness, identity achievement, behaviors, and other group orientation. Scores

on this scale range from 1, low ethnic identification, behaviors, and belongingness, to 5, high ethnic identification.

2. *Child-rearing Beliefs Measure* (Lieber, Fung, Leung, & Leung, 1997) was completed by parents to measure the component of parenting styles. The scale asks participants to rate their agreement or disagreement with each item in a six-point Likert format. Items refer to aspects of parental responsibility, importance of discipline, and obedience. Scores range from 1, strongly disagree to 6, strongly agree, with low scores indicating a lower belief on that factor. The scale yields scores on four factors: Training, Authoritativeness, Shame, and Self-Esteem/Autonomy.
3. *Self-Description Questionnaire* (Marsh, Parker & Smith, 1983) was adapted to measure the self-esteem of adolescents. This scale is specially designed for pre-adolescents and can be used with adolescents. It provides participants with 20 statements which they are asked to rate on a 5 point Likert scale as to whether the statements are true or false with respect to themselves. Apart from yielding a global self-esteem index, the scale also gives indices in different areas: physical abilities, physical appearance, and relationships with peers. Scores range from 1 to 5 for the different subscales. High scores indicate high levels of self-perceived global or specific competence and vice versa.
4. *Grades* were used as a measure of academic performance.

Results

Parents' total ethnic identification and parenting styles: training, shame, authoritativeness and esteem did not account for a significant amount of variance in adolescent self esteem. The R-square was .046 ($F=1.39$, $p=.231$).

Parents' total ethnic identification and parenting styles: training, shame, authoritativeness and esteem did not account for a significant amount of variance in adolescent grades. The R-square was .054 ($F=1.61$, $p=.163$).

Basically this shows that while there may be a slight trend towards accounting for the variance in self esteem and grades using parent's ethnic identification and parenting style, in this sample, the regression is not significant. Any number of reasons might account for this result. It could be because the sample was not large enough. It could be because the sample was not randomly selected, and therefore there wasn't sufficient variance in the dependent variables to begin with.

When adolescent grades were regressed on training, shame and parent's total ethnic identification, it was found that R-squared=.04 ($F=2.21$, $p=.089$). In this analysis, the beta weight for parents' total ethnic identification (.203) was significant at .021. The other beta weights were not significant, though. The results indicate that children's self esteem is higher when parents feel more ethnically identified, and when parents use more training and less shame in their parenting style.

When adolescent self esteem was regressed on parent's ethnic identification, parent's other group orientation (a subscale of the Phinney Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure), adolescent ethnic identification, and adolescents' other group orientation, these variables accounted for 11.5% of the variance in self esteem ($f=4.69$, $p=.001$). When the same analysis was performed with only the Indian subsample, parents' and adolescents' ethnic identification and other group orientation accounted for 13.5% of the variance in adolescents' self esteem. Predictably the R-squared rose by .02 (the significance dropped to .036, $F=2.72$). With the whole group adolescents' total ethnic identification had the

highest beta weight of .264 - the only one that was significant (p=.005), meaning that adolescents who were more ethnically identified also had higher self esteem. The rest of the beta weights were insignificant. For the Indian subgroup only, both parents' ethnic identification, and children's ethnic identification carried significant beta weights (parent ethnic identification beta=.244, p=.03; adolescent ethnic identification beta = .256, p=.03). Again this shows that those adolescents who were themselves more ethnically identified, and those whose parents had higher ethnic identity had higher self esteem than those adolescents who were less ethnically identified themselves, and those who had parents with lower ethnic identity. In other words, this last finding corroborates an intuitive notion: those East Indian adolescents who are happy to be East Indian, try to find out their history and customs, and involve themselves in East Indian practices are more likely to feel good about themselves. Similarly those East Indian adolescents whose parents are proud to be East Indian, who spend time preserving and cherishing their "Indianness" are more likely to feel good about themselves.

The second hypothesis, that there would be significant differences between the Indian and European American families in child rearing styles was borne out in the research with some unexpected twists. There was a significant mean difference between the two subsamples on each of the discipline styles measured. However, the East Indian group rated all the parenting philosophies significantly higher than their European American counterparts (authoritativeness: Indian M=5.04, S.D.=.56; European American M= 4.74, S.D.=.67; shame: Indian M=2.91, S.D.=.81; European American M= 2.68, S.D.=.77; training: Indian M=4.47, S.D.=.67; European American M= 4.01, S.D.=.5; esteem: Indian M=4.6, S.D.=.48; European American M= 4.18, S.D.=.67). All of the differences except shame were significant at less than .01. The difference in shame was significant at p=.07, a clear trend.

There were no group differences on self esteem. School performance of Indians and Caucasians differed at the .017 level. Indians had an average GPA of 3.37, Caucasians of 3.14. Adolescents' other group orientation was not significantly different between the two groups. However parents' other group orientation was: Indian parents had a mean other group orientation of 3.24, while Caucasian parents had a mean other group orientation of 3.54 (p<.01). Parents' total ethnic identification was also significantly different between the Indians (M=4.31) and the Caucasians (M=3.61) (p=.00). Indian adolescents had significantly (p=.000) higher ethnic identification (M=3.95) than their Caucasian counterparts (M=3.33).

It was also hypothesized that European American and East Indian parents would show significantly different parenting styles. This was true for all except the shaming approach. What we had expected was that the Indian subgroup would rate shame and training higher than their European American counterparts. This was confirmed by the data. However, the hypothesis that the European American parents would report using authoritativeness and esteem more than their East-Indian counterparts was not upheld. One explanation for this might be that Indian parents and children alike are actively examining their ethnic identity, their place in a new culture and parents may be more actively thinking about their parenting techniques than their mainstream counterparts. It might indicate a bicultural approach in parenting that East-Indians adopt in their host culture.

The findings support current theories about the difficulties immigrant populations face in adjusting to the American lifestyle. Ethnic minority adolescents face considerable challenges in forming a sense of identity that is compatible with their natal culture and the American mainstream, whereas their immigrant parents must also reconcile their desires to preserve their own culture while facing new cultural demands on themselves and their children. Having a good idea about your ethnic identity, and your relationship within other groups in the community, makes for better psychosocial outcomes in adolescents (both immigrant and mainstream).

It does seem that either the notion of "shame" (Chao, 1995) is either a typically Chinese, and not necessarily Asian, concept; or that immigrants shed this value succumbing the very negative light in which this concept is held in the larger American culture. Based on the present study, it is not very clear which of the two is correct. Further research comparing Indian families in India with Indian Americans and Caucasians would yield more elucidating results on this subject. Training is more highly favored by Indian than by Caucasian parents and this concept is undoubtedly one on which the Asian community seems to reach a consensus.

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